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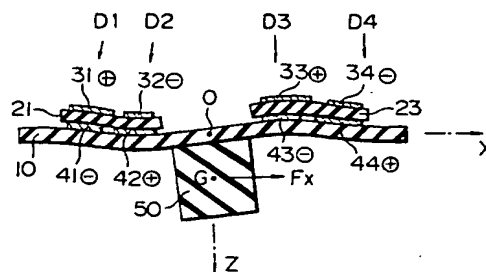
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(54) **SENSOR FOR FORCE, ACCELERATION AND MAGNETISM USING PIEZOELECTRIC DEVICES.**

(57) A sensor for force, acceleration and magnetism which can make high precision detection without temperature compensation and moreover, can be produced by a simple production process. The peripheral portion of a flexible disc-like substrate (10) is fixed to a sensor casing, and an operation member (50) is bonded to the central portion. An X, Y, Z three-dimensional coordinates system is defined with respect to an origin (O) inside the substrate (10), and four sets of detectors (D1 to D4) are disposed along the X axis. Each detector has a sandwich structure in which piezoelectric devices (21,23) are sandwiched between upper electrodes (31-34) and lower electrodes (41-44). When force (Fx) in the direction of the X axis acts on the operation member (50), the substrate (10) undergoes deflection and a positive or negative charge occurs in each electrode. The mode of generation of the charge depends on the direction of the acting force, and the quantity of the generated charge depends on the magnitude of the acting force. Therefore, the component of the acting force in each direction can be detected on the basis of the

charge generation pattern.

FIG. 3



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TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates to a sensor for force/acceleration/magnetism using piezoelectric element, and more particularly to a sensor capable of detecting force, acceleration or magnetism every respective components in multi-dimensional directions.

BACKGROUND ART

In the automobile industry, or the machinery industry, there has been an increased demand for sensors capable of precisely detecting a physical quantity such as force, acceleration or magnetism. Particularly, miniaturized sensors capable of detecting such physical quantities every respective components in two-dimensional or three-dimensional directions are desired.

In order to cope with such demand, there has been proposed a force sensor in which gauge resistors are formed on a substrate made of semiconductor such as silicon, etc. to transform a mechanical distortion produced in the substrate on the basis of a force applied from the external to an electric signal by making use of a piezo resistance effect. If a weight body is attached to the detecting portion of this force sensor, an acceleration sensor for detecting an acceleration applied to the weight body can be realized. Further, if a magnetic body is attached thereto, a magnetic sensor for detecting a magnetism applied to a magnetic body can be realized. For example, sensors based on the above-described principle are disclosed in International Publications No. WO88/08521 and No. WO89/02587 based on the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

Further, in a Japanese Patent Application No. 274299/1990, a sensor utilizing a change in electrostatic capacity between two electrodes, and a sensor of a structure including a piezoelectric element put between two electrode plates are disclosed. These sensors allow a spacing or interval between two electrode plates to be varied by an action of force, acceleration or magnetism, etc., thus to detect a change in the interval as a change of an electrostatic capacitance, or a change of a quantity of charges produced in the piezoelectric element.

Generally, since a gauge resistor or a piezo resistance element has a temperature dependency, in the above-described sensor using semiconductor substrate, if there occurs a change in temperature of an environment where it is used, a detected value will include an error. Accordingly, in order to carry out a precise measurement, it is necessary to carry out a temperature compensation. Particularly, in the case where such a sensor is used in the field such as an automotive vehicle, etc., a temperature

compensation is required with respect to a relatively broad operating temperature range of -40 to +120 °C.

Furthermore, the above-described sensor utilizing a change of electrostatic capacitance has a merit that a manufacturing cost is low, but a drawback that signal processing is difficult because an electrostatic capacitance formed is small. In addition, the conventionally proposed sensor utilizing piezoelectric element has a problem that there is difficulty in manufacturing because it is necessary to put a piezoelectric element between electrodes.

With the above in view, an object of this invention is to provide a sensor for force, acceleration or magnetism, which is capable of carrying out a high precision detection without temperature compensation, and which can be easily manufactured.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

(1) A first feature of this invention is directed to a force sensor using piezoelectric element,

wherein there are prepared four sets of detection elements each comprised of a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of the piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface of the piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin is defined at a point within a substrate having flexibility, an X-axis is defined so that it passes through the origin and extends in a direction parallel to the substrate surface, two sets of the prepared four sets of detection elements and the other two sets thereof are arranged along the X-axis in such a manner that they are respectively in line on the positive side of the X-axis and on the negative side thereof, and the second electrodes of the respective detection elements are fixed on the substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion of the outside of the substrate is fixed to a sensor casing, and

wherein a working body having a function to transmit, to the origin, a force produced on the basis of a physical action applied from the external is provided, thus to detect the force produced in the working body on the basis of charges produced in the respective electrodes of the four sets of detection elements.

(2) A second feature of this invention resides in that, in the above-described force sensor according to the first feature, the relationship between the inside (the side of the origin) and the outside (the side of the peripheral portion) of the substrate is reversed. A force applied to the working body is transmitted to the peripheral portion of the outside of the substrate, and a portion in a vicinity of the origin is fixed to the

sensor casing.

(3) A third feature of this invention is directed to a force sensor using piezoelectric element,

wherein there are prepared four sets of detection elements each comprised of a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of the piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface of the piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin is defined at a point within a substrate having flexibility, an X-axis is defined so that it passes through the origin and extends in a direction parallel to the substrate surface, a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through the origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to the substrate surface, the prepared four sets of detection elements are respectively arranged in line in such a manner that a first detection element is at the outside of the substrate in a negative region of the X-axis, a second detection element is at the inside of the substrate in the negative region of the X-axis, a third detection element is at the inside of the substrate in a positive region of the X-axis, and a fourth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of the X-axis, and the second electrodes of the respective detection elements are fixed to the substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion of the outside of the substrate is fixed to a sensor casing,

wherein a working body having a function to transmit, to the origin, a force produced on the basis of a physical action applied from the external is provided, and

wherein potentials of the first electrodes with respect to the second electrodes fixed on the substrate in the respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in the X-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the first detection element and a potential on the third detection element and a sum of a potential on the second detection element and a potential on the fourth detection element, and

to detect a force in the Z-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the first detection element and a potential on the fourth detection element and a sum of a potential on the second detection element and a potential on the third detection element.

(4) A fourth feature of this invention resides in that, in the above-described force sensor according to the third feature, the relationship between the inside (the side of the origin) and the outside (the side of the peripheral portion) of the substrate is reversed. A force applied to the

working body is transmitted to the peripheral portion of the outside of the substrate, and a portion in a vicinity of the origin is fixed to a sensor casing.

(5) A fifth feature of this invention is directed to a force sensor using piezoelectric element,

wherein there are prepared eight sets of detection elements each comprised of a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of the piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface of the piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin is defined at a point within a substrate having flexibility, an X-axis is defined so that it passes through the origin and extends in a direction parallel to the substrate surface, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to the X-axis at the origin and extends in a direction parallel to the substrate surface, and a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through the origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to the substrate surface,

wherein four of the prepared eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged in line along the X-axis in such a manner that a first detection element is at the outside of the substrate in a negative region of the X-axis, a second detection element is at the inside of the substrate in the negative region of the X-axis, a third detection element is at the inside of the substrate in a positive region of the X-axis, a fourth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of the X-axis, and the second electrodes of these respective detection elements are fixed to the substrate,

wherein the other four of the prepared eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged in line along the Y-axis in such a manner that a fifth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in a negative region of the Y-axis, a sixth detection element is at the inside of the substrate in the negative region of the Y-axis, a seventh detection element is at the inside of the substrate in a positive region of the Y-axis, and an eighth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of the Y-axis, and the second electrodes of these respective detection elements are fixed to the substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion of the outside of the substrate is fixed to a sensor casing, and

wherein a working body having a function to transmit, to the origin, a force produced on the basis of a physical action applied from the external is provided, and

wherein potentials of the first electrodes with respect to the second electrodes fixed on the substrate in the respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in the X-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the first detection element and a potential on the third detection element and a sum of a potential on the second detection element and a potential on the fourth detection element,

to detect a force in the Y-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the fifth detection element and a potential on the seventh detection element and a sum of a potential on the sixth detection element and a potential on the eighth detection element, and

to detect a force in the Z-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the first detection element and a potential on the fourth detection element and a sum of a potential on the second detection element and a potential on the third detection element, a difference between a sum of a potential on the fifth detection element and a potential on the eighth detection element and a sum of a potential on the sixth detection element and a potential on the seventh detection element, or a difference between a sum total of a potential on the first detection element, a potential on the fourth detection element, a potential on the fifth detection element, and a potential on the eighth detection element and a sum total of a potential on the second detection element, a potential on the third detection element, a potential on the sixth detection element, and a potential on the seventh detection element.

(6) A sixth feature of this invention resides in that, in the above-described force sensor according to the fifth feature, the relationship between the inside (the side of the origin) and the outside (the side of the peripheral portion) of the substrate is reversed. A force applied to the working body is transmitted to the peripheral portion at the outside of the substrate, and a portion in a vicinity of the origin is fixed to a sensor casing.

(7) A seventh feature of this invention is directed to a force sensor using piezoelectric element,

wherein there are prepared twelve sets of detection elements each comprised of a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of the piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface of the piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin is defined at a point within a substrate having flexibility, an X-axis is defined so that it passes through the origin and extends in a direction parallel to the substrate surface, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to

the X-axis at the origin and extends in a direction parallel to the substrate surface, a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through the origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to the substrate surface, and a W-axis is defined so that it intersects with respective axes of X, Y and Z at the origin and extends in a direction parallel to the substrate surface,

wherein first four of the prepared twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged in line along the X-axis in such a manner that a first detection element is at the outside of the substrate in a negative region of the X-axis, a second detection element is at the inside of the substrate in the negative region of the X-axis, a third detection element is at the inside of the substrate in a positive region of the X-axis, and a fourth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of the X-axis, and the second electrodes of these respective detection elements are fixed on the substrate,

wherein second four of the prepared twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged in line along the Y-axis in such a manner that a fifth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in a negative region of the Y-axis, a sixth detection element is at the inside of the substrate in a positive region of the Y-axis, a seventh detection element is at the inside of the substrate in a positive region of the Y-axis, and an eighth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of the Y-axis, and the second electrodes of these respective detection elements are fixed on the substrate,

wherein third four of the prepared twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged in line along the W-axis in such a manner that a ninth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in a negative region of the W-axis, a tenth detection element is at the inside of the substrate in the negative region of the W-axis, an eleventh detection element is at the inside of the substrate in a positive region of the W-axis, and a twelfth detection element is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of the W-axis, and the second electrodes of these respective detection elements are fixed on the substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion at the outside of the substrate is fixed to a sensor casing,

wherein a working body having a function to transmit, to the origin, a force produced on the basis of a physical action applied from the external is provided, and

wherein potentials of the first electrodes with respect to the second electrodes fixed on the substrate in the respective detection elements

are obtained,

to detect a force in the X-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the first detection element and a potential on the third detection element and a sum of a potential on the second detection element and a potential on the fourth detection element,

to detect a force in the Y-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the fifth detection element and a potential on the seventh detection element and a sum of a potential on the sixth detection element and a potential on the eighth detection element, and

to detect a force in the Z-axis direction produced in the working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on the ninth detection element and a potential on the twelfth detection element and a sum of a potential on the tenth detection element and a potential on the eleventh detection element.

(8) An eighth feature of this invention resides in that, in the above-described force sensor according to the seventh feature, the relationship between the inside (the inside of the origin) and the outside (the side of the peripheral portion) is reversed. A force applied to the working body is transmitted to the peripheral portion at the outside of the substrate, and a portion in a vicinity of the origin is fixed to a sensor casing.

(9) Ninth to fourteenth features of this invention reside in that, in the above-described force sensors according to the third to eighth features, predetermined electrodes of the respective detection elements are connected to each other to form a plurality of detection terminals, thus to carry out detection of a force by voltages across these detection terminals.

(10) A fifteenth feature of this invention resides in that, in the above-described force sensors, a piezoelectric element comprised of a single substrate is used commonly to the plurality of detection elements.

(11) A sixteenth feature of this invention resides in that, in the above-described force sensors, a working body is caused to produce a force on the basis of an acceleration given from the external, thereby permitting detection of acceleration.

(12) The seventeenth feature of this invention resides in that, in the above-described force sensors, a working body is constituted with a magnetic material to allow the working body to produce a force on the basis of magnetism applied from the external to thereby permit detection of magnetism.

In the force sensor according to this invention, four sets of detection elements are arranged along the X-axis which is defined on a substrate having flexibility. These detection elements are such that one electrodes are fixed on the substrate. When the outside portion (the peripheral portion side) of the substrate is fixed on the sensor casing to allow a force to be applied to the inside (the side of the origin), or the inside (the side of the origin) of the substrate is fixed on the sensor casing in a manner opposite to the above to allow a force to be applied to the outside (the peripheral portion side), a bending is produced in the substrate. The bending thus produced is transmitted to piezoelectric elements of respective detection elements. For this reason, across both electrodes of the respective detection elements, charges corresponding to the position where detection elements are arranged are produced. Accordingly, it is possible to carry out detection of force components relating to the X-axis direction by voltages based on these four sets of detection elements. In addition, the same four sets of detection elements are also able to be used for carrying out detection of force components relating to the Z-axis direction vertical to the substrate surface.

When an X-axis and a Y-axis are defined parallel to the substrate surface, and eight sets of detection elements in total are respectively arranged by four sets on these respective axes, detection of force components relating to three X, Y and Z axes can be made. In addition, in the case where there is a need of independently carrying out detection with respect to the Z-axis, it is sufficient to further supplement four sets of detection elements to thereby provide a configuration such that twelve sets of detection elements in total are arranged.

Further, if a weight body having weight to some extent is used as a working body on which a force is exerted, detection of acceleration can be made. In addition, if a magnetic body is used as the working body mentioned above, detection of magnetism can be made.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a top view of an acceleration sensor according to an embodiment of this invention.

Fig. 2 is a side cross sectional view cut along the X-axis of the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is a side cross sectional view showing the state where a force F_x in the X-axis direction is applied to a center of gravity G of a working body in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 4 is a side cross sectional view showing the state where a force F_z in the Z-axis direction is

applied to the center of gravity G of the working body 50 in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Figs. 5a and 5b are circuit diagrams each showing a detection circuit for detecting a force F_x in the X-axis direction in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 6 is a table for explaining an operation of the circuits shown in Figs. 5a and 5b.

Figs. 7a and 7b are circuit diagrams each showing a detection circuit for detecting a force F_y in the Y-axis direction in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 8 is a table for explaining an operation of the circuits shown in Figs. 7a and 7b.

Figs. 9a and 9b are circuit diagrams each showing a detection circuit for detecting a force F_z in the Z-axis direction in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 10 is a table for explaining an operation of the circuits shown in Figs. 9a and 9b.

Figs. 11a and 11b are circuit diagrams each showing a detection circuit capable of commonly carrying out detection of a force F_x in the X-axis direction and a force F_z in the Z-axis direction in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 12 is a circuit diagram showing another detection circuit for detecting a force F_z in the Z-axis direction in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 13 is a circuit diagram showing a further detection circuit for detecting a force F_z in the Z-axis direction in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 14 is a side cross sectional view of an acceleration sensor according to another embodiment of this invention wherein only a cross sectional portion is shown.

Fig. 15 is a top view of the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 14.

Fig. 16 is a top view showing an embodiment of an acceleration sensor constituted with only one disk-shaped piezoelectric element.

Fig. 17 is a side cross sectional view of an acceleration sensor according to a further embodiment of this invention wherein only a cross sectional portion is shown.

Fig. 18 is a top view of an acceleration sensor according to an embodiment of this invention using sixteen sets of detection elements.

Fig. 19 is a side cross sectional view of an acceleration sensor according to an embodiment of this invention where an inside of a substrate is fixed.

Fig. 20 is a circuit diagram showing another detection circuit used in the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 21 is a circuit diagram showing a detection circuit with respect to the Z-axis direction used in

the acceleration sensor shown in Fig. 15.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

This invention will now be described in accordance with embodiments shown. While this invention is applicable to any one of a force sensor, an acceleration sensor and a magnetic sensor, an example where this invention is applied to the acceleration sensor will be described below.

Basic structure of the sensor

Fig. 1 is a top view of an acceleration sensor according to an embodiment of this invention, and Fig. 2 is a side cross sectional view thereof. This sensor has a disk-shaped substrate 10 having flexibility. In this specification, in consideration of convenience of explanation, an origin O is determined at a central portion of this substrate 10, and an X-axis, a Y-axis and a Z-axis are respectively taken in directions indicated by arrows in the figure, thus to define an XYZ three-dimensional coordinate system. The XY plane is a plane in parallel to the substrate surface of the substrate 10, and the Z-axis is an axis vertical thereto. Fig. 2 corresponds a cross section cut along the X-axis of the sensor shown in Fig. 1.

As shown in Fig. 1, fan-shaped piezoelectric elements 21, 22, 23 and 24 are arranged on an upper surface of the substrate 10 so as to surround the origin O, and two upper electrodes are respectively formed on upper surfaces of the piezoelectric elements. Namely, upper electrodes 31, 32 are formed on the upper surface of the piezoelectric element 21; upper electrodes 33, 34 are formed on the upper surface of the piezoelectric element 22; upper electrodes 35, 36 are formed on the upper surface of the piezoelectric element 23; and upper electrodes 37, 38 are formed on the upper surface of the piezoelectric element 24. Although not shown in Fig. 1, lower electrodes 41 - 48 in the same form as that of the upper electrodes 31 - 38 are formed in correspondence therewith on the lower surfaces of respective piezoelectric elements. The upper electrodes 31 - 38 and the lower electrodes 41 - 48 are opposite with piezoelectric elements being put therebetween. This appearance is clearly indicated by the side cross sectional view of Fig. 2. A working body 50 is connected on the lower surface of the substrate 10. The working body 50 is a columnar weight body and has a function to produce a force on the basis of an acceleration exerted thereon to transmit this force to the portion in the vicinity with the origin O of the substrate 10. Further, as shown in Fig. 2, the peripheral portion of the substrate 10 is fixedly

supported by a sensor casing 60. In this specification, it is assumed that the peripheral portion of the substrate 10 and the portion in the vicinity of the origin O are called outside and inside, respectively. Eventually, the outside of the disk-shaped substrate 10 is fixed by the sensor casing 60, and the inside is in a free state.

If the substrate 10 is a substrate having flexibility, substrates of any material may be employed. The substrate 10 may be constituted with an insulating material such as glass, ceramic or resin, or may be constituted with conductive material such as metal. It is to be noted that in the case where the substrate 10 is constituted with conductive material, it is necessary to form an insulating layer on the upper surface of the substrate 10 in order to allow the lower electrodes 41 - 48 to be electrically independent each other. Explanation will be described by taking an example where the substrate 10 is constituted with an insulating material. Further, piezoelectric ceramic is used in this embodiment as the piezoelectric elements 21 - 24. Respective electrodes 31 - 38, 41 - 48 may be constituted with any material as long as that material is a conductive material. Further, since the working body 50 is only required to function as a weight body, any material may be used. However, sufficient mass is necessary in order to enhance a detection sensitivity. From a viewpoint of this, it is preferable that material having high density is used. While, in this embodiment, there is adopted a construction in which the substrate 10 and the working body 50 are separate with each other, such a construction is employed only for convenience of explanation of functions of respective portions, and there may be therefore adopted, in a practical sense, a construction in which the substrate 10 and the working body 50 are integrally formed by using the same material.

The manufacturing process for this sensor is very simple. There may be adopted a method of forming respective electrodes 31 - 38, 41 - 48 (e.g., vacuum-depositing metal) on both the surfaces of the four fan-shaped piezoelectric elements 21 - 24 to dispose such elements in a sandwiched form at a predetermined position of the substrate 10, and then fixing the lower surfaces of the lower electrodes 41 - 48 on the upper surface of the substrate 10 by bonding agent, etc. Alternatively, there may be adopted a method of forming the lower electrodes 41 - 48 on the substrate 10, then forming the piezoelectric ceramic by burning process thereon, and then forming the upper electrodes 31 - 38 thereon.

In view of consideration of an operation of this sensor, this structure can be comprehended as follows. It is now that an element assembly constituted by a piezoelectric element, an upper elec-

trode formed on the upper surface of this piezoelectric element, and a lower electrode formed on the lower surface of the piezoelectric element will be called a set of detection element. When such definition is employed, it can be said that the sensor of this embodiment is of a structure in which eight sets of detection elements are disposed on the substrate 10. Namely, a first detection element D1 comprised of a piezoelectric element 21, and electrodes 31, 41, a second detection element D2 comprised of a piezoelectric element 21, and electrodes 32, 42, a third detection element D3 comprised of a piezoelectric element 23, and electrodes 33, 43, and a fourth detection element D4 comprised of the piezoelectric element 23, and electrodes 34, 44 are arranged in succession, from the left to the right along the X-axis direction in the figure, in order recited. On the other hand, a fifth detection element D5 comprised of a piezoelectric element 22, and electrodes 35, 45, a sixth detection element D6 comprised of the piezoelectric element 22, and electrodes 36, 46, a seventh detection element D7 comprised of a piezoelectric element 24, and electrodes 37, 47, and an eighth detection element D8 comprised of the piezoelectric element 24, and electrodes 38, 48 are arranged in succession, from the upper side to the lower side along the Y-axis direction in the figure, in order recited.

Phenomenon occurring when acceleration is applied

Let now consider what phenomenon takes place in the case where an acceleration is applied to the above-described acceleration sensor. Assuming now that an acceleration in the X-axis direction is applied to working body 50, a force F_x in the X-axis direction (having magnitude proportional to mass of the working body 50) will be produced at the center of gravity G of the working body 50 as shown in Fig. 3. By this force F_x , a moment in a counterclockwise direction in Fig. 3 is produced at the center of gravity G. Since the outside (peripheral portion) of the substrate 10 is fixed, the substrate 10 is bent as shown. This bending is transmitted to the piezoelectric elements and respective electrodes as it is. As a result, a deformation takes place such that a portion expands and another portion contracts (In the figure, for easiness of understanding, only the cross sectional portion is indicated, and expansion/contraction is indicated in an exaggerated manner). It is known that charges of polarities as shown in Fig. 3 are produced in respective electrodes. Namely, positive charges are produced in the electrodes 31, 42, 33 and 44, and negative charges are produced in the electrodes 41, 32, 43 and 34. It is to be noted that such a property of the piezoelectric element is dis-

cussed in, e.g., "Development of Acceleration Sensor and Acceleration Evaluation System for Super Low Range Frequency (pp37-49, No. 910273, Sensors & Actuators 1991)". As stated above, when a force F_x in the X-axis direction is applied, charges are produced between upper and lower electrodes in the detection elements D1 - D4 arranged along the X-axis. On the contrary, no charge is produced between upper and lower electrodes in the detection elements D5 - D8 arranged along the Y-axis. The reason why such phenomenon takes place is that the detection elements D5 - D8 are arranged extending over the positive region and the negative region of the X-axis as shown in Fig. 1, charges produced at one side portion are canceled by charges produced at the other side portion, so no charge is produced as a whole.

On the other hand, when it is assumed that an acceleration in the Y-axis direction is applied to the working body 50, a force F_y in the Y-axis direction is produced at the center of gravity G of the working body 50. Also in the case, it is understood that exactly the same phenomenon will take place. It is now to be noted that charges are produced between upper and lower electrodes in the detection elements D5 - D8 arranged along the Y-axis, whereas no charge is produced between upper and lower electrodes in the detection elements D1 - D4.

When it is assumed that an acceleration in the Z-axis direction is applied to the working body 50, a force F_z in the Z-axis direction is exerted on the center of gravity G of the working body 50. As shown in Fig. 4, the origin O is pulled toward the downward direction of the figure by this force F_z , so the substrate 10 is bent as shown. Deformation of the piezoelectric element by this bending produces charges of the polarity as shown in Fig. 4. Namely, positive charges are produced in the electrodes 31, 42, 43 and 34, and negative charges are produced in the electrodes 41, 32, 33 and 44.

As stated above, when acceleration components in the X, Y and Z axis directions are exerted on the working body 50, charges will be produced in peculiar modes peculiar to respective detection elements depending upon respective cases. In addition, a quantity of charges produced is a value related to a magnitude of an acceleration exerted, and a polarity of charges produced is determined in dependency upon the direction of an acceleration exerted. For example, in Fig. 3, when a force $-F_x$ in the negative direction of the X-axis is exerted on the center of gravity G, signs of charges produced in respective electrodes are reversed. Similarly, in Fig. 4, when a force $-F_z$ in the negative direction of the Z-axis is exerted on the center of gravity G, signs of charges produced in respective electrodes are reversed. Eventually, by detecting charges produced in respective detection ele-

ments, it is possible to independently detect acceleration components in the X, Y and Z axis directions. This is the fundamental principle of this invention.

Detection circuit for acceleration

A detection circuit for actually carrying out detection of an acceleration by using the previously described acceleration sensor will now be described. Figs. 5a and 5b are circuit diagrams showing detection circuits for detecting a force F_x in the X-axis direction. In these figures, D1 - D4 indicate respective detection elements arranged on the X-axis. In the circuit diagrams, wirings with respect to the upper and the lower electrodes of respective detection elements are indicated. A force F_x in the X-axis direction (i.e., an acceleration in the X-axis direction) can be detected by measuring a voltage V_x across terminals Ax and Bx.

Fig. 6 is a Table showing polarity of charges produced in respective electrodes when force components F_x , F_y , F_z in the respective axial directions are exerted on the working body 50. For example, the polarity signs of the column of F_x of this Table correspond to signs attached to respective electrodes shown in Fig. 3, and numerical symbols of electrodes described in the electrode column E are arranged in order of the circuit diagram of Fig. 5a. By making reference to the column of F_x in this Table, it is seen that, in the circuit diagrams of Figs. 5a and 5b, negative charges are produced on the electrodes on the terminal Ax side of respective detection elements, and positive charges are produced on the electrodes on the terminal Bx side. For example, in the circuit of Fig. 5b, if a quantity of charges produced in respective electrodes are counted as 1, charges of -4 are collected or gathered at the terminal Ax, and charges of +4 are collected at the terminal Bx. Conversely, in the case where a force of $-F_x$ is exerted, the polarity is reversed. As a result, charges of +4 are collected at the terminal Ax and charges of -4 are collected at the terminal Bx. Similarly, in the case of Fig. 5a, in the case where a force of $+F_x$ is exerted, charges of -1 are gathered at the terminal Ax and charges of +1 are gathered at the terminal Bx. Conversely, in the case where a force of $-F_x$ is exerted, the polarity is reversed. As a result, charges of +1 are gathered at the terminal Ax and charges of -1 are gathered at the terminal Bx. Eventually, a voltage V_x across the terminals Ax and Bx becomes equal to a value corresponding to the force F_x in the X-axis direction.

Let now consider what value is outputted as a voltage V_x in the case where a force F_y in the Y-axis direction is exerted. In the case where a force F_y is exerted as indicated by the column of F_y of

the Table of Fig. 6, no charge is produced in respective electrodes. The reason thereof is as follows. Namely, as previously described above, since detection elements D1 - D4 are arranged along the X-axis, when a force F_y in the Y-axis direction is exerted, positive and negative charges partially produced are canceled with each other. Accordingly, the voltage V_x is not influenced by the force F_y in the Y-axis direction by any means.

Let now consider what value is outputted as a voltage V_x in the case where a force F_z in the Z-axis direction is exerted. Polarity signs of the column of F_z of the Table of Fig. 6 correspond to signs attached to respective electrodes shown in Fig. 4. Considering that respective electrodes producing such charges are wired as shown in Figs. 5a and 5b, positive and negative charges are similarly canceled. As a result, a voltage value V_x in the case where only the force F_z is exerted becomes equal to zero. Accordingly, the voltage V_x is not influenced by the force F_z in the Z-axis direction.

From the above, it is seen that in the case where three-dimensional force components F are exerted on the working body 50, only a component F_x in the X-axis direction is detected as a voltage V_x , and this detection value is not influenced by the component F_y in the Y-axis direction and the component F_z in the Z-axis direction.

Figs. 7a and 7b are circuit diagrams showing a detection circuit for detecting a force F_y in the Y-axis direction. In these figures, D5 - D8 indicate respective detection elements arranged on the Y-axis. In the circuit diagrams, wirings with respect to the upper and the lower electrodes of the respective detection elements are shown. A force component F_y in the Y-axis direction (i.e., acceleration in the Y-axis direction) can be detected by measuring a voltage V_y across the terminals A_y and B_y .

Fig. 8 is a Table showing polarity of charges produced in respective electrodes when force components F_x , F_y and F_z in respective axial directions are exerted on the working body 50. In this Table, numerical symbols of electrodes described in the electrode column E are arranged in order of the circuit diagram of Fig. 7a. It is seen from this Table that the voltage V_y is a value determined only by the magnitude and the direction of the force F_y in the Y-axis direction. Eventually, in the case when a three-dimensional force F is exerted on the working body 50, only a component F_y in the Y-axis direction thereof is detected as a voltage V_y , and this detection value is not affected by the component F_x in the X-axis direction and the component F_z in the Z-axis direction.

Figs. 9a and 9b are circuit diagrams showing detection circuits for detecting a force F_z in the Z-axis direction. In these figures, D1 - D4 indicate

respective detection elements arranged on the X-axis. In the circuit diagrams, wirings with respect to the upper and the lower electrodes of respective detection elements are shown. A force component F_z in the Z-axis direction (i.e., acceleration in the Z-axis direction) can be detected by measuring a voltage V_z across the terminals A_z and B_z .

Fig. 10 is a Table showing polarity of charges produced in respective electrodes when force components F_x , F_y and F_z in respective axial directions are exerted on the working body 50. Numerical symbols of electrodes described in the electrode column E are arranged in order of the circuit diagram of Fig. 9a. It is seen from this Table that the voltage V_z is a value determined by the magnitude and the direction of the force F_z in the Z-axis direction. Eventually, in the case where a three-dimensional force F is exerted on the working body 50, only a component F_z in the Z-axis direction is detected as a voltage V_z , and this detection value is not affected by the component in the X-axis direction and the component F_y in the Y-axis direction.

As described above, by four detection elements D1 - D4 arranged along the X-axis direction, a force component F_x in the X-axis direction and a force component F_z in the Z-axis direction can be detected. Further, by four detection elements D5 - D8 arranged along the Y-axis direction, a force component F_y in the Y-axis direction can be detected. Eventually, detection elements D1 - D4 are commonly used for detection in the X-axis direction and detection in the Z-axis direction. Circuits for permitting such common use are shown in Figs. 11a and 11b. The circuit of Fig. 11a constitutes a switching circuit using four switches S1 - S4. A component in the X-axis direction is detected by a voltage V_x across the common terminal A_x and the terminal B_x for X-axis, and a component in the Z-axis direction is detected by a voltage V_z across the common terminal A_z and the terminal B_z for Z-axis. The switches S1 and S2 interlock with each other. Namely, if one is turned ON, the other is turned OFF. Similarly, the switches S3 and S4 interlock with each other. Namely, if one is turned ON, the other is turned OFF. As shown in the figure, when the switches S1, S2, S3 and S4 are respectively placed in ON, OFF, OFF and ON state, this circuit is equivalent to the detection circuit for the component in the X-axis direction shown in Fig. 5a. Further, when the respective switches are switched so that the switches S1, S2, S3 and S4 are in OFF, ON, ON and OFF state, this circuit is equivalent to the detection circuit for the component in the Z-axis direction shown in Fig. 7a. Similarly, the circuit of Fig. 11b can switch detection for the component in the X-axis direction and detection for the component in the Z-axis direction

by operation of four switches S1 - S4. As shown, when the switches S1, S2, S3 and S4 are respectively placed in OFF, ON, ON and OFF state, this circuit is equivalent to the circuit for detecting a component in the X-axis direction shown in Fig. 5b. In addition, when respective switches are switched so that the switches S1, S2, S3 and S4 are placed in ON, OFF, OFF and ON state, this circuit is equivalent to a circuit for detecting a component in the Z-axis direction shown in Fig. 7b.

It is to be noted that detection of the force component F_z in the Z-axis direction may be carried by using detection elements D5 - D8 in place of the detection elements D1 - D4. In this case, the detection elements D5 - D8 are commonly used for detection in the Y-axis direction and detection in the Z-axis direction. In addition, all eight detection elements D1 - D8 may be used to detect a force component F_z in the Z-axis direction. In this case, a detection circuit as shown in Fig. 12 or 13 may be constructed.

The temperature characteristic of this sensor will now be described. The piezoelectric element has a property such that charges are produced between electrodes with respect to a sudden temperature change, and is an element exhibiting so called a pyro effect (refer to Fig. 16 of the above-mentioned reference : pp37-49, No. 910273, sensors & Actuators 1991). In the sensor according to this invention, since detection values in respective axial directions of X, Y and Z are calculated on the basis of differences between voltages obtained by respective detection elements, the influence by temperature will be canceled. Accordingly, there is no necessity of additionally providing a circuit for temperature compensation.

Other embodiments of the sensor

Another structure of an acceleration sensor according to this invention will now be disclosed. Fig. 14 is a side cross sectional view of a sensor of this structure, and Fig. 15 is a top view thereof. The cross section cut along the X-axis of the sensor shown in Fig. 15 corresponds to Fig. 14. It is to be noted that, in the side cross sectional view of Fig. 14, only the sectional portion is indicated in order to avoid that the figure becomes complicated. The sensor in this embodiment differs from the sensor shown in Figs. 1 and 2 in that independent piezoelectric elements are provided every respective detection elements. Namely, in the sensor shown in Figs. 1 and 2, common piezoelectric element 21 was used for detection elements D1 and D2, common piezoelectric element 23 was used for the detection element D3 and D4, common piezoelectric element 22 was used for the detection elements D5 and D6, and common piezoelectric ele-

ment 24 was used for detection element D7 and D8. On the contrary, in the sensor shown in Figs. 14 and 15, eight piezoelectric elements 21a, 21b, 22a, 22b, 23a, 23b, 24a and 24b are provided so that respective detection elements D1 - D8 are constituted by physically completely independent parts.

In this invention, if electrodes of respective detection elements are independent with respect to electrodes of other detection elements, it is sufficient from a theoretical point of view that the piezoelectric elements are common to respective detection elements. In an extreme example, as shown in Fig. 16, only one large disk-shaped piezoelectric element may be prepared to constitute eight sets of detection elements in a manner to commonly use this one piezoelectric element. It should be noted that since recombination of charges takes place within the piezoelectric element in a practical sense, it is preferable to use piezoelectric elements which are independent every respective detection elements as in the embodiment shown in Figs. 14 and 15 in order to strictly measure vibration of a low frequency. However, the manufacturing process becomes complicated accordingly.

Fig. 17 is a side cross sectional view showing a further structure of an acceleration sensor according to this invention. Also in this cross sectional view, only the cross section is indicated in order to avoid that the figure becomes complicated. While detection elements are arranged on the upper surface of the substrate 10 in the previously described respective embodiments, detection elements are arranged on the lower surface of the substrate 10 in this embodiment. In short, in the sensor according to this invention, if four detection elements D1 - D4 can be arranged along the X-axis and four detection elements D5 - D8 can be arranged along the Y-axis, it does not matter whether those detection elements are arranged on the upper surface or the lower surface of the substrate 10. Further, there may be a configuration such that various detection elements are arranged on the upper and the lower surfaces at random, or a configuration such that they are arranged on the upper and the lower surfaces. It should be noted that it is necessary to allow wirings between electrodes to be proper in consideration of polarity of charges produced on respective electrodes in order to carry out a correct detection.

While, in the above-described embodiment, eight sets of detection elements are used to detect components in respective three-dimensional axial directions, a larger number of detection elements may be used to carry out similar detection. An embodiment where its top view is shown in Fig. 18 is the example where sixteen sets of detection elements D1 - D16 are used. In this embodiment,

the detection elements D1 - D8 shown in Fig. 18 are identical to the detection elements D1 - D8 shown in Fig. 1 (the area is caused to be slightly smaller). The detection elements D1 - D4 and the detection elements D5 - D8 are arranged along the X-axis and along the Y-axis, respectively. In this embodiment, on the XY-plane, a W1 axis having an angle of 45 degrees relative to the X-axis and a W2 axis having 135 degrees relative to the X-axis are further defined. Thus, detection elements D9 - D12 and detection elements D13 - D16 are arranged along the W1 axis and along the W2 axis, respectively.

When such arrangement is carried out, it is possible to detect a force in the X-axis direction by the detection elements D1 - D4, to detect a force in the Y-axis direction by the detection elements D5 - D8, and to detect a force in the Z-axis direction by the detection elements D9 - D12 or D13 - D16, or the detection elements D9 - D16. Accordingly, detection of force components in the X, Y and Z axis directions can be carried out by completely independent separate detection elements. It is true, but detection can be made even with detection elements arranged along any axis in parallel to the substrate surface with respect to the Z-axis direction perpendicular to the surface of the substrate 10. Namely, if any sets of detection elements D1 - D4 arranged along the X-axis, detection elements D5 - D8 arranged along the Y-axis, detection elements D9 - D12 arranged along the W1 axis, and detection elements D13 - D16 arranged along the W2 axis are used, detection of a force in the Z-axis direction can be made. Additionally, the piezoelectric element used here may be constituted with a single substrate 25 as shown in Fig. 16.

While, all in the above-described embodiments, the peripheral portion at the outside of the substrate 10 is fixed to the sensor casing, and working body 50 is formed in the vicinity of the origin O at the inside of the substrate 10, the relationship between the inside and the outside of the substrate may be completely reversed. Namely, as in an embodiment where its cross sectional view is shown in Fig. 19, there may be employed a configuration such that a working body 50 (in this example, the function as a working body is lost, so this working body is used as a mere pedestal) in the vicinity of the origin O at the inside of the substrate 10 is fixed on a sensor casing 61, and that a working body 51 is newly formed at the peripheral portion outside the substrate 10. In this embodiment, the working body 51 is a ring-shaped weight body attached along the outer periphery of the disk-shaped substrate 10. In such a configuration, the inside of the substrate 10 is fixed so that a force is exerted toward the outside. However, this embodiment does not differ from the previously

described embodiments in that bending is produced in the substrate 10 on the basis of a force exerted. Accordingly, the structure in which the relationship between the inside and the outside of the substrate is reversed as described above may be applied to all the previously described embodiments.

Other embodiments of the detection circuit

Let now consider in more detail the meaning that the circuits shown in Figs. 5a and 5b have. Consideration is made in connection with the case where charges produced on the basis of a force are converted to potentials with consideration of signs. Namely, a potential of a first electrode relating to a second electrode which is fixed on the substrate (one of lower electrodes 41 - 48 in the example of Fig. 1) is defined as a potential in this detection element. In other words, assuming that electrodes fixed on the substrate are grounded, a voltage value appearing on each other electrode indicates a potential in that detection element. When reference is made to the circuit shown in Figs. 5a and 5b, it is seen that, with respect to the detection elements D1 and D3, electrodes 41, 43 fixed on the substrate are connected to the Ax side; and with respect to the detection elements D2 and D4, electrodes 42, 44 fixed on the substrate are connected to the terminal Bx side. Namely, the detection elements D1, D3 and the detection elements D2, D4 are connected in directions opposite to each other. Eventually, it is seen that a difference between a sum of a potential on the detection element D1 and a potential on the detection element D3 and a sum of a potential on the detection element D2 and a potential on the detection element D4 is a voltage Vx appearing across the terminals Ax and Bx. Namely, if potentials obtained by the detection elements D1, D2, D3 and D4 are respectively represented by V1, V2, V3 and V4, the voltage Vx is expressed as $Vx = (V1 + V3) - (V2 + V4)$. Accordingly, if voltage detectors for detecting these voltages V1, V2, V3 and V4 are provided as shown in Fig. 20, a voltage Vx can be obtained as an output of a differential amplifier AP1.

When reference is made to the circuit shown in Figs. 7a and 7b, it is seen that, with respect to the detection elements D5, D7, electrodes 45 and 47 fixed on the substrate are connected to the terminal Ay side, and that, with respect to detection elements D6 and D8, electrodes 46, 48 fixed on the substrate are connected to the terminal By side. Namely, the detection elements D5, D7 and the detection elements D6, D8 are connected in directions opposite to each other. Eventually, it is seen that a difference between a sum of a potential on the detection element D5 and a potential on the

detection element D7 and a sum of a potential on the detection element D6 and a potential on the detection element D8 is a voltage V_y appearing across the terminals A_y and B_y . Namely, when potentials on the detection elements D5, D6, D7 and D8 are respectively represented by V_5 , V_6 , V_7 and V_8 , the voltage V_y is expressed as $V_y = (V_5 + V_7) - (V_6 + V_8)$. Accordingly, if voltage detectors 85, 86, 87 and 88 for detecting these voltages V_5 , V_6 , V_7 and V_8 are provided as shown in Fig. 20, a voltage V_y can be obtained as an output of a differential amplifier AP3.

Further, when reference is made to the circuit shown in Figs. 9a and 9b, it is seen that, with respect to detection elements D1 and D4, electrodes 41, 44 fixed on the substrate are connected to the terminal A_z side, and that, with respect to detection elements D2 and D3, electrodes 42, 43 fixed on the substrate are connected to the terminal B_z side. Namely, the detection elements D1, D4 and the detection elements D2, D3 are connected in directions opposite to each other. Eventually, it is seen that a difference between a sum of a potential on the detection element D1 and a potential on the detection element D4 and a sum of a potential on the detection element D2 and a potential on the detection element D3 is a voltage V_z appearing across the terminals A_z and B_z . Namely, if potentials on the detection elements D1, D2, D3 and D4 are respectively represented by V_1 , V_2 , V_3 and V_4 , the voltage V_z is expressed as $V_z = (V_1 + V_4) - (V_2 + V_3)$. Accordingly, the voltage detectors 81, 82, 83 and 84 are used, thereby making it possible to obtain a voltage V_z as an output of the differential amplifier AP2.

Further, in a sensor using sixteen sets of detection elements shown in Fig. 18, with respect to the voltage V_z , detection can be made by a circuit shown in Fig. 21. Namely, an approach is employed to detect potentials $V_9 - V_{16}$ on the detection elements D9 - D16 by voltage detectors 91 - 98, thereby making it possible to obtain a voltage V_z as an output of a differential amplifier AP4. In this case, the differential amplifier AP2 shown in FIG. 20 becomes unnecessary, and components in X, Y and Z axis directions can be detected by completely separate independent circuits. While all the potentials $V_9 - V_{12}$ are used in the circuit shown in Fig. 21, only four potentials $V_9 - V_{12}$ or only four potentials $V_{13} - V_{16}$ may be used. It should be noted that all potentials $V_9 - V_{16}$ are used for carrying out high accuracy measurement.

Still further embodiments

While this invention has been described in accordance with various embodiments, this invention should not be limited to these embodiments,

and therefore may be carried out in various modes in addition to the above-mentioned embodiments. While, in the above-described embodiments, for example, detection of acceleration components in three-dimensional axis directions by using eight sets or sixteen sets of detection elements, detection of acceleration components in two-dimensional directions may be carried out by using only four sets of detection elements. For example, by using only the detection elements D1 - D4, detection of a component in the X-axis direction and a component in the Z-axis direction can be carried out.

Further, while the above-described embodiments are all directed to the example where this invention is applied to an acceleration sensor, this invention is applicable to a sensor for force or magnetism. For example, when the sensor of this invention is used as a force sensor, there may be employed a configuration such that a contact is extended from working body 50 to transmit an external force to substrate 10 by this contact. In addition, in the case where the sensor of this invention is used as a sensor for magnetism, if the working body 50 is constituted with a magnetic body such as iron, cobalt or nickel, etc. a force produced by action of magnetism is detected, thereby making it possible to indirectly detect magnetism.

As stated above, in accordance with the sensor according to this invention, there are prepared plural sets of detection elements each comprised of a plate-shaped piezoelectric element and a pair of electrodes formed on both the surfaces of this piezoelectric element to dispose such sets of detection elements at a predetermined position on a flexible substrate to detect force, acceleration or magnetism exerted thereon on the basis of voltage values produced across respective electrodes. Thus, high accuracy detection can be made without temperature compensation, and the manufacturing process becomes easy.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

A sensor using a piezoelectric element according to this invention can be utilized as a sensor for force, acceleration or magnetism. In addition, this sensor can detect these physical quantities every respective components in three-dimensional directions. Accordingly, when mounted in an automotive vehicle or an industrial robot, this sensor can be widely utilized for carrying out pressure detection, acceleration detection or magnetism detection of respective parts. Particularly, if this sensor is used as an acceleration sensor adapted to be mounted in an automotive vehicle, it is possible to precisely detect an impact at the time of head-on collision or side collision every respective components in axial

directions. Thus, this sensor can be utilized as an air-bag system.

Claims

1. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (50), a sensor casing (60) and four sets of detection elements (D1, D2, D3, D4), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21, 23) in a plate form, a first electrode (31, 32, 33, 34) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode (41, 42, 43, 44) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10) and X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, said four sets of detection elements being arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that two of them (D3, D4) are located on a positive side of said X-axis and two of them (D1, D2) are located on a negative side thereof, and the respective second electrodes (41, 42, 43, 44) of said respective detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion at an outside of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (60), and

wherein said working body (50) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to said origin,

thus to detect said force on the basis of charges produced in said respective electrodes of said four sets of detection elements.

2. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (51), a sensor casing (61) and four sets of detection elements (D1, D2, D3, D4), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21, 23) in a plate form, a first electrode (31, 32, 33, 34) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode (41, 42, 43, 44) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10) and X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, said four sets of detection elements being arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that two of them (D3, D4) are located on a positive side of said X-axis and two of them (D1, D2) are located on a negative side thereof, and the respective sec-

ond electrodes (41, 42, 43, 44) of said respective detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a portion in a vicinity of said origin of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (61), and

wherein said working body (51) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to a peripheral portion at an outside of said substrate,

thus to detect said force on the basis of charges produced in said respective electrodes of said four sets of detection elements.

3. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (50), a sensor casing (60) and four sets of detection elements (D1, D2, D3, D4), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21, 23) in a plate form, a first electrode (31, 32, 33, 34) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode (41, 42, 43, 44) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, and a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface, said four sets of detection elements being arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that a first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, a second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, a third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and a fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of said X-axis, and the respective second electrodes (41, 42, 43, 44) of said respective detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (60),

wherein said working body (50) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to said origin, and

wherein potentials of said first electrodes (31, 32, 33, 34) with respect to said second electrodes (41, 42, 43, 44) fixed on said substrate in said respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction

applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said third detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element, and

to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said third detection element.

4. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (51), a sensor casing (61) and four sets of detection elements (D1, D2, D3, D4), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21, 23) in a plate form, a first electrode (31, 32, 33, 34) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode (41, 42, 43, 44) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, and a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface, said four sets of detection elements being arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that a first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, a second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, a third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and a fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of said X-axis, and the respective second electrodes (41, 42, 43, 44) of said respective detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a portion in a vicinity of said origin of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (61),

wherein said working body (51) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate, and

wherein potentials of said first electrodes with respect to said second electrodes fixed on said substrate in said respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said third detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element, and

to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said third detection element.

5. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (50), a sensor casing (60) and eight sets of detection elements (D1 - D8), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21 - 24) in a plate form, a first electrode (31 - 38) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode (41 - 48) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, and a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of the X-axis, and the respective second electrodes (41 - 44) of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of

said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes (45 - 48) of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (60),

wherein said working body (50) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to said origin, and

wherein potentials of said first electrodes (31 - 38) with respect to said second electrodes (41 - 48) fixed on said substrate in said respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said third detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element,

to detect a force in said Y-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said fifth detection element and a potential on said seventh detection element and a sum of a potential on said sixth detection element and a potential on said eighth detection element, and

to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said third detection element, a difference between a sum of a potential on said fifth detection element and a potential on said eighth detection element and a sum of a potential on said sixth detection element and a potential on said seventh detection element, or a difference between a sum total of a potential on said first detection element, a potential on said fourth detection element, a potential on said fifth detection element, and a potential on said eighth detection element and a sum total of a potential on said second detection element, a potential on said third detection element, a potential on said sixth detection element, and a potential on said seventh detection element.

6. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (51), a sensor casing (61) and eight sets of detection elements (D1 - D8), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21 - 24) in a plate form, a first electrode (31 - 38) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode (41 - 48) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, and a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of the X-axis, and the respective second electrodes (41 - 44) of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes (45 - 48) of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a portion in a vicinity of said origin of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (61),

wherein said working body (51) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to a

peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate, and

wherein potentials of said first electrodes with respect to said second electrodes fixed on said substrate in said respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said third detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element,

to detect a force in said Y-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said fifth detection element and a potential on said seventh detection element and a sum of a potential on said sixth detection element and a potential on said eighth detection element, and

to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said third detection element, a difference between a sum of a potential on said fifth detection element and a potential on said eighth detection element and a sum of a potential on said sixth detection element and a potential on said seventh detection element, or a difference between a sum total of a potential on said first detection element, a potential on said fourth detection element, a potential on said fifth detection element, and a potential on said eighth detection element and a sum total of a potential on said second detection element, a potential on said third detection element, a potential on said sixth detection element, and a potential on said seventh detection element.

7. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (50), a sensor casing (60) and twelve sets of detection elements (D1 - D12), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said

origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface, and a W-axis is defined so that it intersects with said respective axes of X, Y and Z at said origin and extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said X-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth detection elements (D9 - D12) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said W-axis in such a manner that said ninth detection element (D9) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said W-axis, said tenth detection element (D10) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said W-axis, said eleventh detection element (D11) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said W-axis, and a twelfth detection element (D12) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said W-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said ninth to twelfth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing,

wherein said working body has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to said origin, and

wherein potentials of said first electrodes with respect to said second electrodes fixed on said substrate in said respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said third detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and a potential on said fourth detection element,

to detect a force in said Y-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said fifth detection element and a potential on said seventh detection element and a sum of a potential on said sixth detection element and a potential on said eighth detection element, and

to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said ninth detection element and a potential on said twelve detection element and a sum of a potential on said tenth detection element and a potential on said eleventh detection element.

8. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (51), a sensor casing (61) and twelve sets of detection elements (D1 - D12), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface, and a W-axis is defined so that it intersects with said respective axes of X, Y and Z at said origin and extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of

said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said X-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth detection elements (D9 - D12) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said W-axis in such a manner that said ninth detection element (D9) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said W-axis, said tenth detection element (D10) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said W-axis, said eleventh detection element (D11) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said W-axis, and a twelfth detection element (D12) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said W-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said ninth to twelfth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a portion in a vicinity of said origin of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing,

wherein said working body has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate, and

wherein potentials of said first electrodes with respect to said second electrodes fixed on said substrate in said respective detection elements are obtained,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a difference between a sum of a potential on said first detection element and a potential on said third detection element and a sum of a potential on said second detection element and

a potential on said fourth detection element,
 to detect a force in said Y-axis direction
 applied to said working body on the basis of a
 difference between a sum of a potential on
 said fifth detection element and a potential on
 said seventh detection element and a sum of a
 potential on said sixth detection element and a
 potential on said eighth detection element, and
 to detect a force in said Z-axis direction
 applied to said working body on the basis of a
 difference between a sum of a potential on
 said ninth detection element and a potential on
 said twelve detection element and a sum of a
 potential on said tenth detection element and a
 potential on said eleventh detection element.

9. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10)
 having flexibility, a working body (50), a sensor
 casing (60) and four sets of detection elements
 (D1, D2, D3, D4), each of said detection ele-
 ments comprising a piezoelectric element (21,
 23) in a plate form, a first electrode (31, 32, 33,
 34) formed on a first surface of said piezoelec-
 tric element, and a second electrode (41, 42,
 43, 44) formed on a second surface of said
 piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point
 within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined
 so that it passes through said origin and ex-
 tends in a direction parallel to a substrate
 surface of said substrate, and a Z-axis is de-
 fined so that it passes through said origin and
 extends in a direction perpendicular to said
 substrate surface, said four sets of detection
 elements being arranged along said X-axis in
 such a manner that a first detection element
 (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a
 negative region of said X-axis, a second detec-
 tion element (D2) is at an inside of said sub-
 strate in the negative region of said X-axis, a
 third detection element (D3) is at the inside of
 said substrate in a positive region of said X-
 axis, and a fourth detection element (D4) is at
 the outside of the substrate in the positive
 region of said X-axis, and the respective sec-
 ond electrodes (41, 42, 43, 44) of said respec-
 tive detection elements are fixed on said sub-
 strate,

wherein a peripheral portion at the outside
 of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing
 (60), and

wherein said working body (50) has a func-
 tion to transmit a force applied thereto to said
 origin,

said force sensor further comprising:

a first detection terminal (Ax) connectable
 to the second electrode (41) of said first detec-
 tion element, the first electrode (32) of said

second detection element, the second elec-
 trode (43) of said third detection element, and
 the first electrode (34) of said fourth detec-
 tion element,

a second detection terminal (Bx) connec-
 table to the first electrode (31) of said first
 detection element, the second electrode (42) of
 said second detection element, the first elec-
 trode (33) of said third detection element, and
 the second electrode (44) of said fourth detec-
 tion element,

a third detection terminal (Az) connectable
 to the second electrode (41) of said first detec-
 tion element, the first electrode (32) of said
 second detection element, the first electrode
 (33) of said third detection element, and the
 second electrode (44) of said fourth detec-
 tion element, and

a fourth detection terminal (Bz) connec-
 table to the first electrode (31) of said first
 detection element, the second electrode (42) of
 said second detection element, the second
 electrode (43) of said third detection element,
 and the first electrode (34) of said fourth detec-
 tion element,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction
 applied to said working body on the basis of a
 potential difference (Vx) across said first and
 second detection terminals, and to detect a
 force in said Z-axis direction applied to said
 working body on the basis of a potential dif-
 ference (Vz) across said third and fourth detec-
 tion terminals.

10. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10)
 having flexibility, a working body (51), a sensor
 casing (61) and four sets of detection elements
 (D1, D2, D3, D4), each of said detection ele-
 ments comprising a piezoelectric element (21,
 23) in a plate form, a first electrode (31, 32, 33,
 34) formed on a first surface of said piezoelec-
 tric element, and a second electrode (41, 42,
 43, 44) formed on a second surface of said
 piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point
 within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined
 so that it passes through said origin and ex-
 tends in a direction parallel to a substrate
 surface of said substrate, and a Z-axis is de-
 fined so that it passes through said origin and
 extends in a direction perpendicular to said
 substrate surface, said four sets of detection
 elements being arranged along said X-axis in
 such a manner that a first detection element
 (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a
 negative region of said X-axis, a second detec-
 tion element (D2) is at an inside of said sub-
 strate in the negative region of said X-axis, a

third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and a fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of the substrate in the positive region of said X-axis, and the respective second electrodes (41, 42, 43, 44) of said respective detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a portion in a vicinity of said origin of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (61), and

wherein said working body (51) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate,

said force sensor further comprising:

a first detection terminal (Ax) connectable to the second electrode (41) of said first detection element, the first electrode (32) of said second detection element, the second electrode (43) of said third detection element, and the first electrode (34) of said fourth detection element,

a second detection terminal (Bx) connectable to the first electrode (31) of said first detection element, the second electrode (42) of said second detection element, the first electrode (33) of said third detection element, and the second electrode (44) of said fourth detection element,

a third detection terminal (Az) connectable to the second electrode (41) of said first detection element, the first electrode (32) of said second detection element, the first electrode (33) of said third detection element, and the second electrode (44) of said fourth detection element, and

a fourth detection terminal (Bz) connectable to the first electrode (31) of said first detection element, the second electrode (42) of said second detection element, the second electrode (43) of said third detection element, and the first electrode (34) of said fourth detection element,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vx) across said first and second detection terminals, and to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vz) across said third and fourth detection terminals.

11. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (50), a sensor casing (60) and eight sets of detection elements (D1 - D8), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21 -

24) in a plate form, a first electrode (31 - 38) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode (41 - 48) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, and a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of the X-axis, and the respective second electrodes (41 - 44) of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes (45 - 48) of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (60), and

wherein said working body (50) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to said origin,

said force sensor further comprising:

a first detection terminal (Ax) connectable to the second electrode (41) of said first detection element, the first electrode (32) of said

second detection element, the second electrode (43) of said third detection element, and the first electrode (34) of said fourth detection element,

a second detection terminal (Bx) connectable to the first electrode (31) of said first detection element, the second electrode (42) of said second detection element, the first electrode (33) of said third detection element, and the second electrode (44) of said fourth detection element,

a third detection terminal (Ay) connectable to the second electrode (45) of said fifth detection element, the first electrode (36) of said sixth detection element, the second electrode (47) of said seventh detection element, and the first electrode (38) of said eighth detection element,

a fourth detection terminal (By) connectable to the first electrode (35) of said fifth detection element, the second electrode (46) of said sixth detection element, the first electrode (37) of said seventh detection element, and the second electrode (48) of said eighth detection element,

a fifth detection terminal (Az) connectable to the second electrode (41) of said first detection element, the first electrode (32) of said second detection element, the first electrode (33) of said third detection element, and the second electrode (44) of said fourth detection element, and

a sixth detection terminal (Bz) connectable to the first electrode (31) of said first detection element, the second electrode (42) of said second detection element, the second electrode (43) of said third detection element, and the first electrode (34) of said fourth detection element,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vx) across said first and second detection terminals, to detect a force in said Y-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vy) across said third and fourth detection terminals, and to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vz) across said fifth and sixth detection terminals.

12. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (51), a sensor casing (61) and eight sets of detection elements (D1 - D8), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element (21 - 24) in a plate form, a first electrode (31 - 38) formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric

element, and a second electrode (41 - 48) formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, and a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of the X-axis, and the respective second electrodes (41 - 44) of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said eight sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes (45 - 48) of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a portion in a vicinity of said origin of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (61), and

wherein said working body (51) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate,

said force sensor further comprising:

a first detection terminal (Ax) connectable to the second electrode (41) of said first detection element, the first electrode (32) of said second detection element, the second elec-

trode (43) of said third detection element, and the first electrode (34) of said fourth detection element,

a second detection terminal (Bx) connectable to the first electrode (31) of said first detection element, the second electrode (42) of said second detection element, the first electrode (33) of said third detection element, and the second electrode (44) of said fourth detection element,

a third detection terminal (Ay) connectable to the second electrode (45) of said fifth detection element, the first electrode (36) of said sixth detection element, the second electrode (47) of said seventh detection element, and the first electrode (38) of said eighth detection element,

a fourth detection terminal (By) connectable to the first electrode (35) of said fifth detection element, the second electrode (46) of said sixth detection element, the first electrode (37) of said seventh detection element, and the second electrode (48) of said eighth detection element,

a fifth detection terminal (Az) connectable to the second electrode (41) of said first detection element, the first electrode (32) of said second detection element, the first electrode (33) of said third detection element, and the second electrode (44) of said fourth detection element, and

a sixth detection terminal (Bz) connectable to the first electrode (31) of said first detection element, the second electrode (42) of said second detection element, the second electrode (43) of said third detection element, and the first electrode (34) of said fourth detection element,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vx) across said first and second detection terminals, to detect a force in said Y-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vy) across said third and fourth detection terminals, and to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference (Vz) across said fifth and sixth detection terminals.

13. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (50), a sensor casing (60) and twelve sets of detection elements (D1 - D12), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface

of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface, and a W-axis is defined so that it intersects with said respective axes of X, Y and Z at said origin and extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said X-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth detection elements (D9 - D12) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said W-axis in such a manner that said ninth detection element (D9) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said W-axis, said tenth detection element (D10) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said W-axis, said eleventh detection element (D11) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said W-axis,

and a twelfth detection element (D12) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said W-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said ninth to twelfth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a peripheral portion of the outside of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (60), and

wherein said working body (50) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to said origin,

said force sensor further comprising:

a first detection terminal connectable to the second electrode of said first detection element, the first electrode of said second detection element, the second electrode of said third detection element, and the first electrode of said fourth detection element,

a second detection terminal connectable to the first electrode of said first detection element, the second electrode of said second detection element, the first electrode of said third detection element, and the second electrode of said fourth detection element,

a third detection terminal connectable to the second electrode of said fifth detection element, the first electrode of said sixth detection element, the second electrode of said seventh detection element, and the first electrode of said eighth detection element,

a fourth detection terminal connectable to the first electrode of said fifth detection element, the second electrode of said sixth detection element, the first electrode of said seventh detection element, and the second electrode of said eighth detection element,

a fifth detection terminal connectable to the second electrode of said ninth detection element, the first electrode of said tenth detection element, the first electrode of said eleventh detection element, and the second electrode of said twelfth detection element, and

a sixth detection terminal connectable to the first electrode of said ninth detection element, the second electrode of said tenth detection element, the second electrode of said eleventh detection element, and the first electrode of said twelfth detection element,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference across said first and second detection terminals, to detect a force in said Y-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference across said third and fourth detection terminals, and to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference across said fifth and

sixth detection terminals.

14. A force sensor comprising a substrate (10) having flexibility, a working body (51), a sensor casing (61) and twelve sets of detection elements (D1 - D12), each of said detection elements comprising a piezoelectric element in a plate form, a first electrode formed on a first surface of said piezoelectric element, and a second electrode formed on a second surface of said piezoelectric element,

wherein an origin (O) is defined at a point within said substrate (10), an X-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction parallel to a substrate surface of said substrate, a Y-axis is defined so that it is perpendicular to said X-axis at said origin and it extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface, a Z-axis is defined so that it passes through said origin and extends in a direction perpendicular to said substrate surface, and a W-axis is defined so that it intersects with said respective axes of X, Y and Z at said origin and extends in a direction parallel to said substrate surface,

wherein first, second, third and fourth detection elements (D1 - D4) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said X-axis in such a manner that said first detection element (D1) is at an outside of said substrate in a negative region of said X-axis, said second detection element (D2) is at an inside of said substrate in the negative region of said X-axis, said third detection element (D3) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said X-axis, and said fourth detection element (D4) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said X-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said first to fourth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth detection elements (D5 - D8) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said Y-axis in such a manner that said fifth detection element (D5) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said Y-axis, said sixth detection element (D6) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said Y-axis, said seventh detection element (D7) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said Y-axis, and said eighth detection element (D8) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said Y-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said fifth to eighth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth

detection elements (D9 - D12) of said twelve sets of detection elements are respectively arranged along said W-axis in such a manner that said ninth detection element (D9) is at the outside of said substrate in a negative region of said W-axis, said tenth detection element (D10) is at the inside of said substrate in the negative region of said W-axis, said eleventh detection element (D11) is at the inside of said substrate in a positive region of said W-axis, and a twelfth detection element (D12) is at the outside of said substrate in the positive region of said W-axis, and the respective second electrodes of said ninth to twelfth detection elements are fixed on said substrate,

wherein a portion in a vicinity of said origin of said substrate is fixed to said sensor casing (61), and

wherein said working body (51) has a function to transmit a force applied thereto to a peripheral portion at the outside of said substrate,

said force sensor further comprising:

a first detection terminal connectable to the second electrode of said first detection element, the first electrode of said second detection element, the second electrode of said third detection element, and the first electrode of said fourth detection element,

a second detection terminal connectable to the first electrode of said first detection element, the second electrode of said second detection element, the first electrode of said third detection element, and the second electrode of said fourth detection element,

a third detection terminal connectable to the second electrode of said fifth detection element, the first electrode of said sixth detection element, the second electrode of said seventh detection element, and the first electrode of said eighth detection element,

a fourth detection terminal connectable to the first electrode of said fifth detection element, the second electrode of said sixth detection element, the first electrode of said seventh detection element, and the second electrode of said eighth detection element,

a fifth detection terminal connectable to the second electrode of said ninth detection element, the first electrode of said tenth detection element, the first electrode of said eleventh detection element, and the second electrode of said twelfth detection element, and

a sixth detection terminal connectable to the first electrode of said ninth detection element, the second electrode of said tenth detection element, the second electrode of said eleventh detection element, and the first elec-

trode of said twelfth detection element,

to detect a force in said X-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference across said first and second detection terminals, to detect a force in said Y-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference across said third and fourth detection terminals, and to detect a force in said Z-axis direction applied to said working body on the basis of a potential difference across said fifth and sixth detection terminals.

15. A force sensor as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein a piezoelectric element (25) comprised of a single substrate is used commonly to a plurality of detection elements (D1 - D8).

16. A sensor as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein a working body is caused to produce a force on the basis of an acceleration applied from the external, thereby permitting detection of acceleration.

17. A sensor as set forth in any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein a working body is constituted with a magnetic material to allow said working body to produce a force on the basis of magnetism applied from the external, thereby permitting detection of magnetism.

FIG. 1

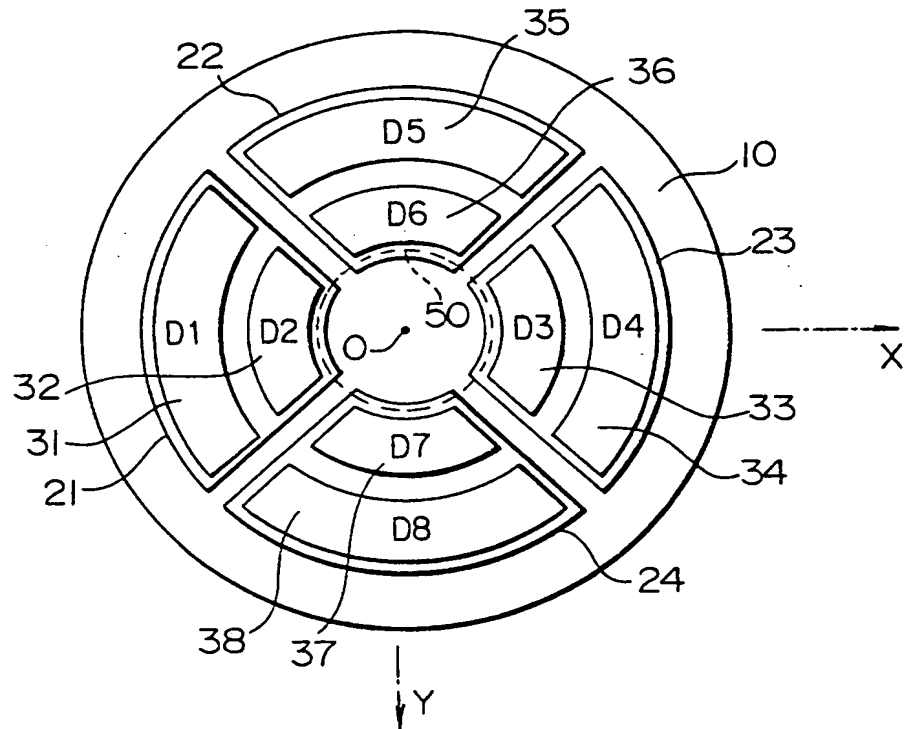


FIG. 2

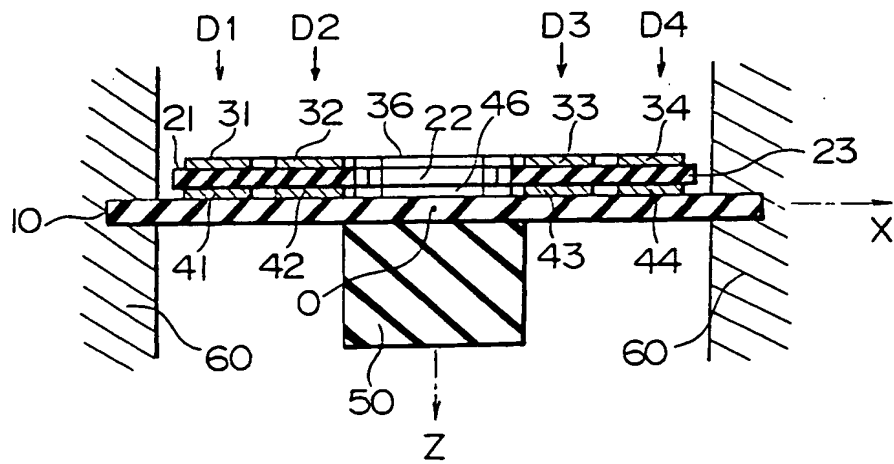


FIG. 3

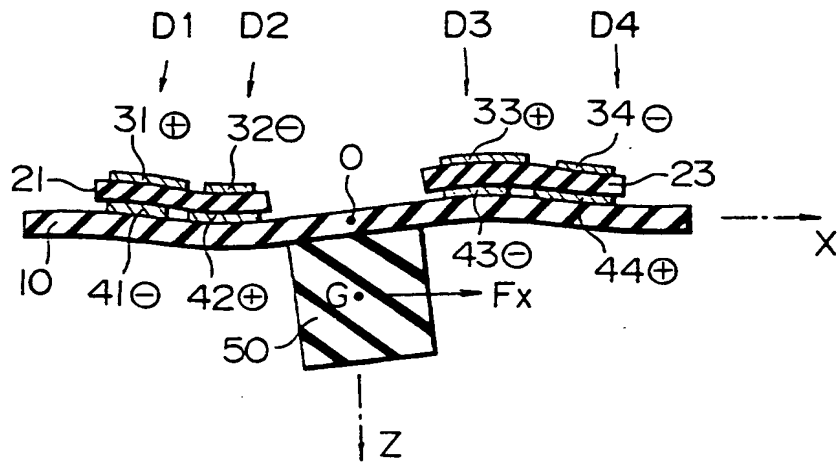


FIG. 4

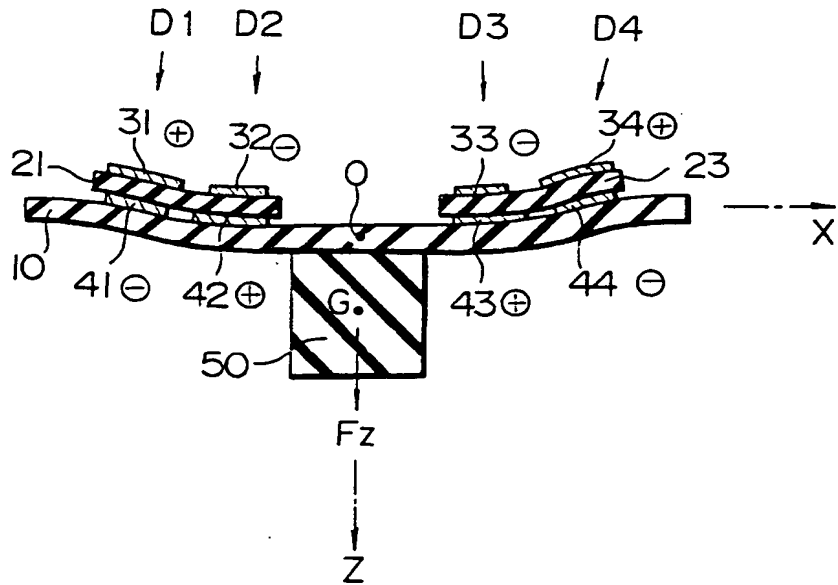


FIG. 5a

FIG. 5b

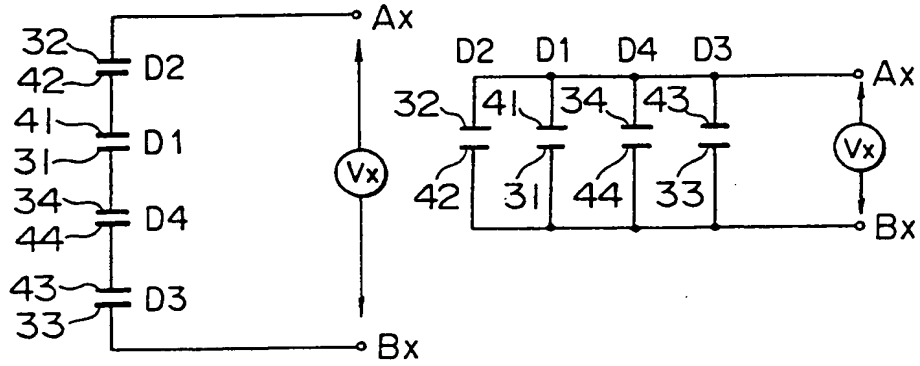


FIG. 6

E	F _x	F _y	F _z
32	-	0	-
42	+	0	+
41	-	0	-
31	+	0	+
34	-	0	+
44	+	0	-
43	-	0	+
33	+	0	-

FIG. 7a

FIG. 7b

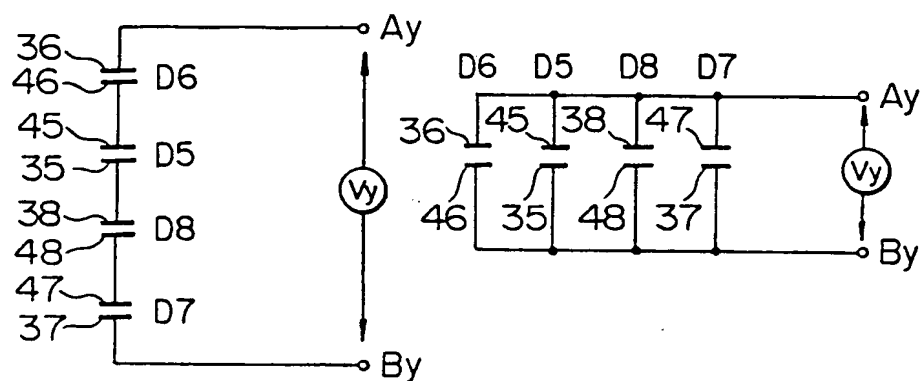


FIG. 8

E	F _x	F _y	F _z
36	0	-	-
46	0	+	+
45	0	-	-
35	0	+	+
38	0	-	+
48	0	+	-
47	0	-	+
37	0	+	-

FIG. 9a

FIG. 9b

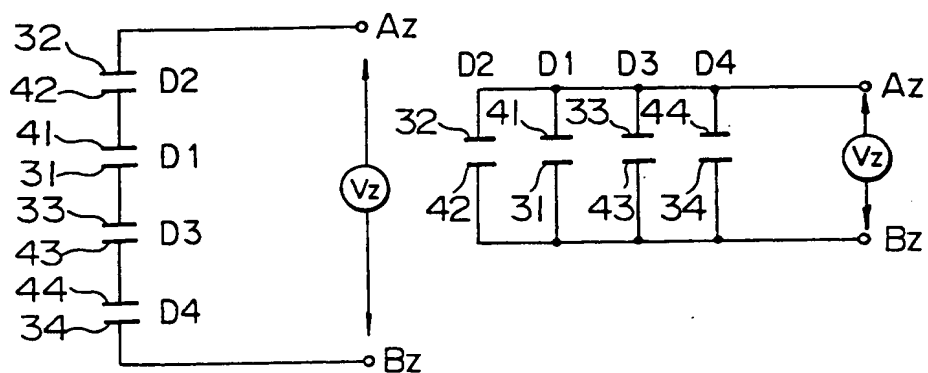


FIG. 10

E	F _x	F _y	F _z
32	-	0	-
42	+	0	+
41	-	0	-
31	+	0	+
33	+	0	-
43	-	0	+
44	+	0	-
34	-	0	+

FIG. 11a

FIG. 11b

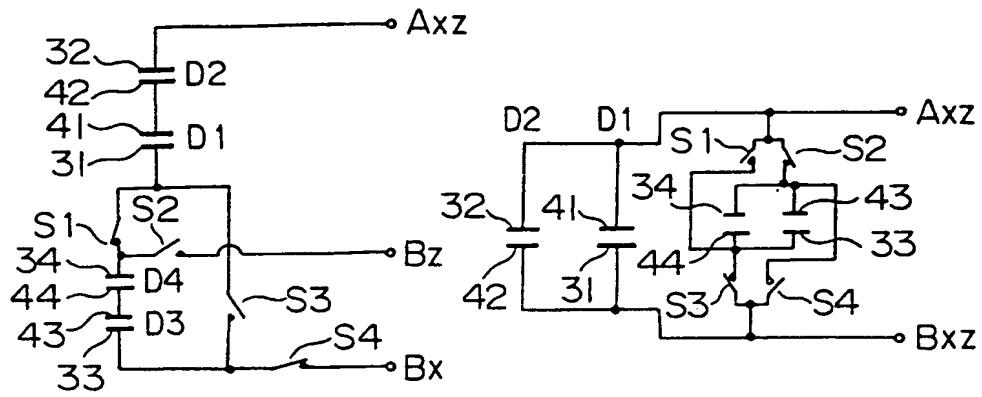


FIG. 12

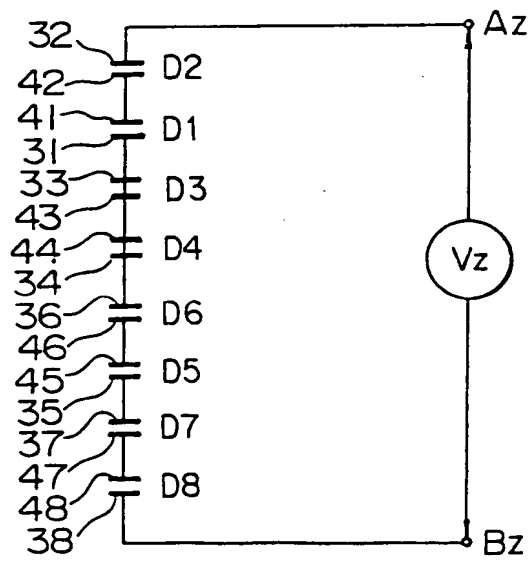


FIG. 13

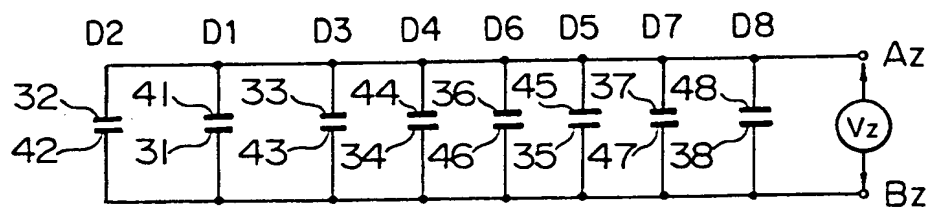


FIG. 14

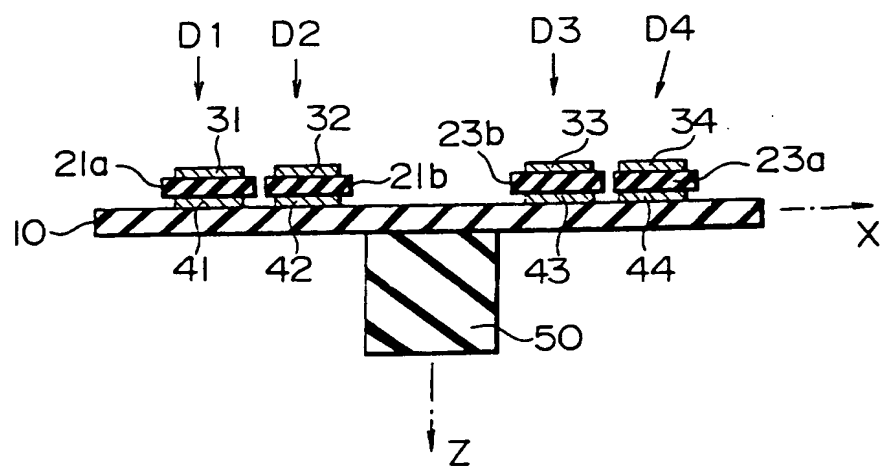


FIG. 15

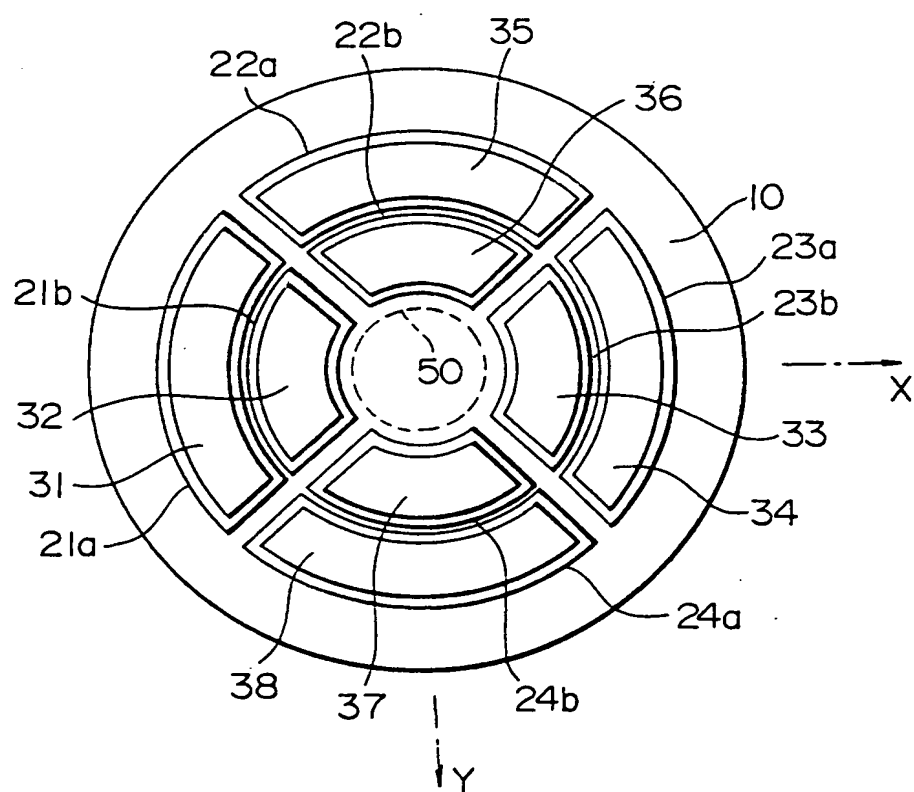


FIG. 16

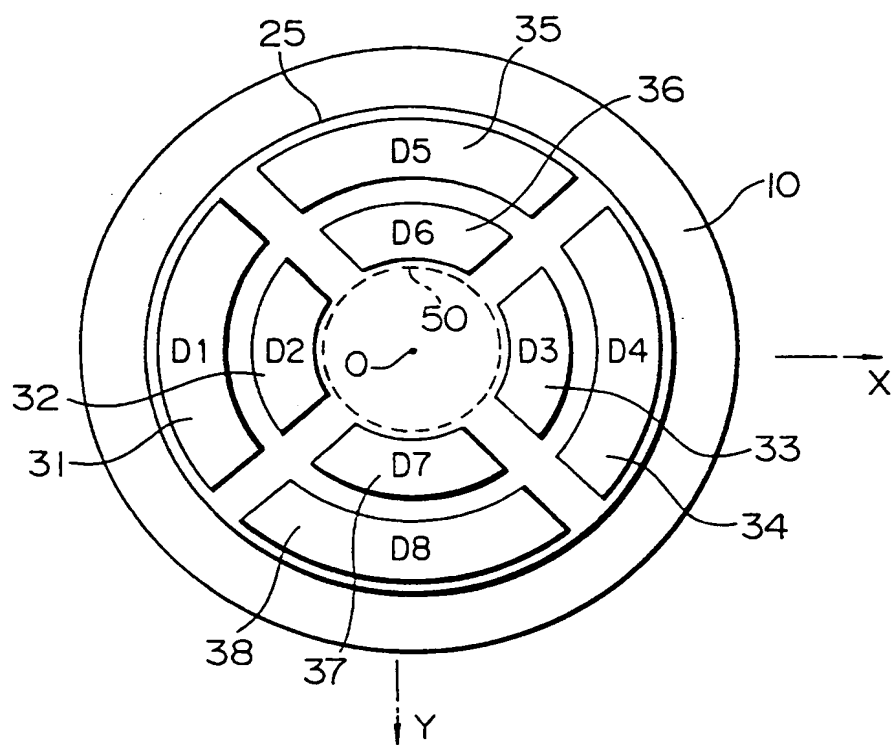


FIG. 17

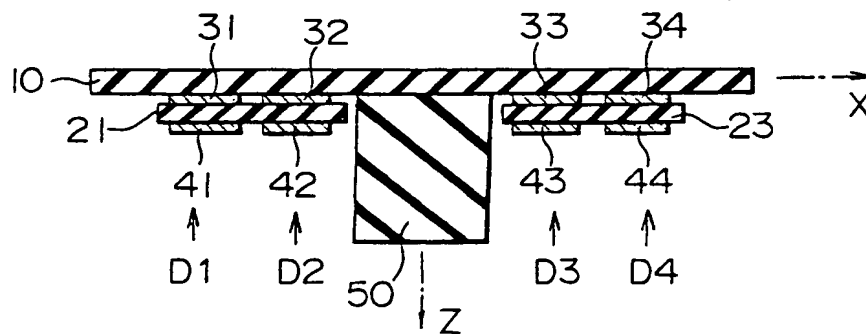


FIG. 18

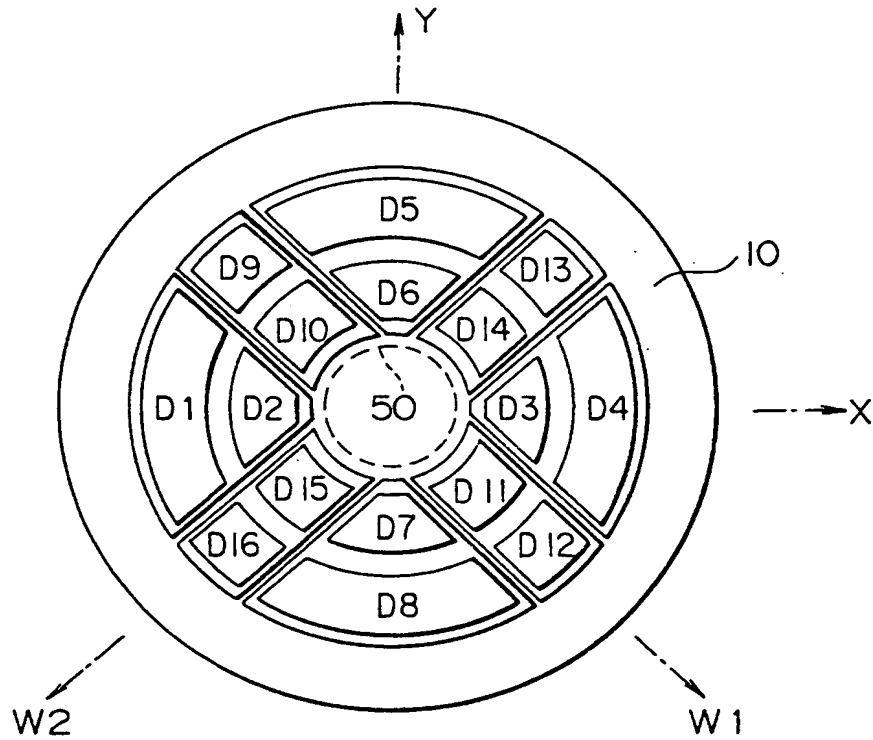


FIG. 19

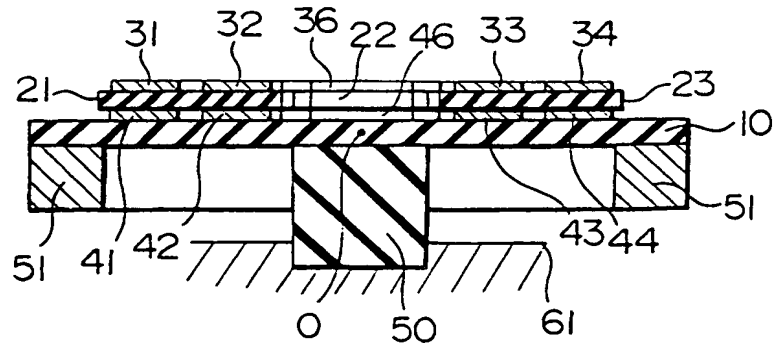


FIG. 20

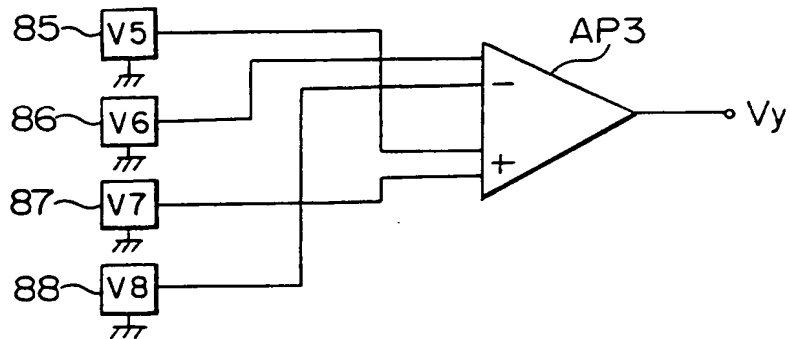
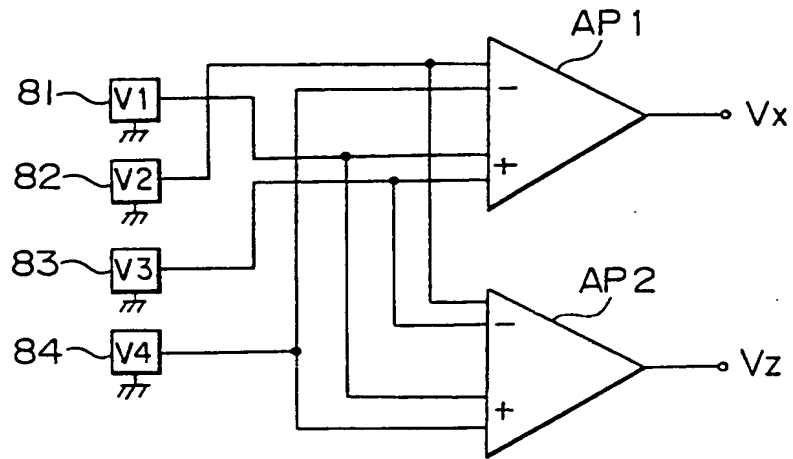
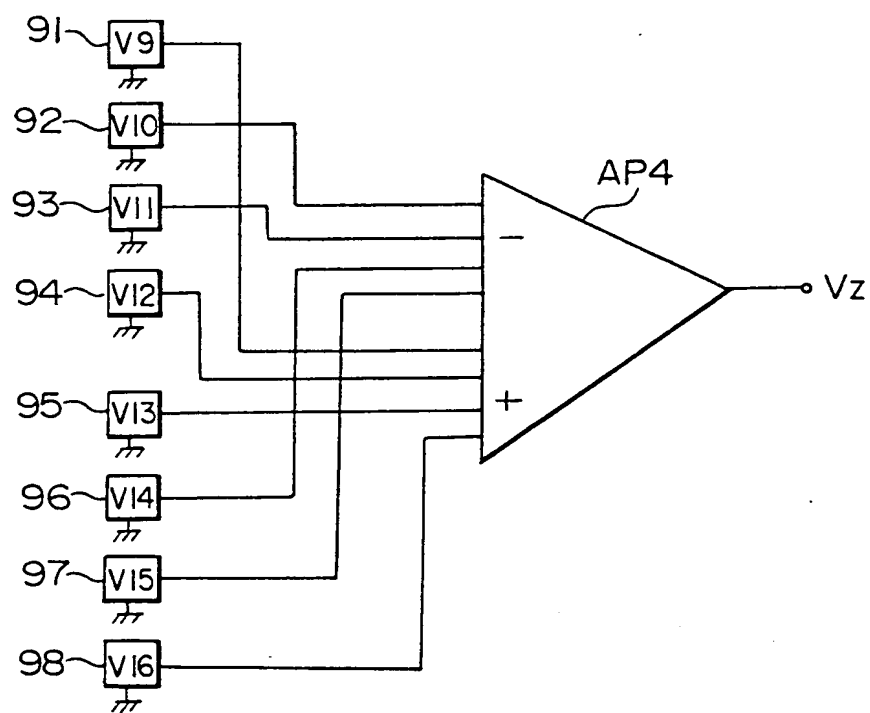


FIG. 21



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No. PCT/JP92/00882

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (If several classification symbols apply, indicate all) *		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC		
Int. Cl. ⁵ G01L1/16		
II. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum Documentation Searched ⁷		
Classification System ¹	Classification Symbols	
IPC	G01L1/16	
Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation to the extent that such Documents are included in the Fields Searched *		
Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1933 - 1992 Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971 - 1992		
III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT *		
Category ⁸	Citation of Document, ¹¹ with Indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹²	Relevant to Claim No. ¹³
A	JP, B2, 58-4967 (Yokogawa Denki Seisakusho, K.K.), January 28, 1983 (28. 01. 83), & BR, A, 7803467 & US, A, 4248098 & GB, A, 1601548	
A	JP, A, 63-127134 (NEC Corp.), May 31, 1988 (31. 05. 88), (Family: none)	
<p>* Special categories of cited documents: ¹⁰</p> <p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> <p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>"S" document member of the same patent family</p>		
IV. CERTIFICATION		
Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search	Date of Mailing of this International Search Report	
August 20, 1992 (20. 08. 92)	September 8, 1992 (08. 09. 92)	
International Searching Authority	Signature of Authorized Officer	
Japanese Patent Office		